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SOME

ASSISTANCE

OFFERED TO

PARENTS

WITH RESPECT TO THE

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

OF THEIR

CHILDREN,

IN A

DISCOURSE

From PROV. XXII. 6.

By BENJAMIN DAWSON, L. L. D.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE *author of the following pages makes not the common apology for their appearance in public,* viz. "*that they were drawn from him by the irreſiſtible* "*importunity of an affectionate people.*" *And indeed, as he looks upon ſuch an apology as intended only to make the people anſwerable for the author's reputation, ſo he owns, that this is by no means an extorted but his own voluntary publication. If it meet with a favourable reception, though but from a few ſerious and well-diſpoſed Chriſtians, it will anſwer his expectation. If it ſhould not, he will be ſorry for it, and blame none but himſelf. He is ſenſible that a performance of this nature can recommend itſelf to a few only. For who but parents will think themſelves concerned to peruſe it? And out of this number how many can he expect, in this age of extreme politeneſs, delicacy of taſte, and refined judgment, will give themſelves the trouble, on ſeeing ſo plain a title and ſo beaten a text, to turn over the firſt leaf? The ſhortneſs of it, however, may tempt ſome even to read it throughout: And as a few Hints may be more acceptable, on ſuch a ſubject, than a large and laboured Treatiſe, ſo he flatters himſelf, that in this ſhort compaſs of a ſermon, he has given ſuch as will be thought unexceptionably ſcriptural, of great importance, and ſufficiently comprehenſive,*

To Mrs. DAWSON

OF

MANCHESTER,

Relict of the Reverend

Mr. ELY DAWSON.

Honoured Madam,

IN dedicating this ſmall performance to You, I break through the general cuſtom of Authors, who ſeem to think none worthy to patronize their works, but thoſe that are diſtinguiſhed by Birth, Title or Fortune

Fortune. Their reaſon for this they generally acknowledge to be ſome particular favours received, for which they conſider a Dedication, as a kind of genteel receipt. Allow me, MADAM, the ſame privilege, and to preſent You with this, as a teſtimony of filial gratitude for a liberal and pious Education, a favour, for which as I ſhall be ever thankful, ſo I eſteem it greater than any which the moſt conſpicuous for Birth, Title or Fortune are able to beſtow upon Me.

Permit me alſo, MADAM, to beg Your Patronage of theſe few pages; ſince, as narrow as your Sphere may ſeem, if a work of this nature gain your approbation, I am certain it will, on that account, find an eaſy acceſs into many worthy families. For they are not a few to whom Your affectionate and judicious endeavours in training up a numerous family in the principles of religion, are well known, and to whom Your exemplary piety, prudence, and virtue have rendered You long reſpectable. That a life ſo valuable

may

may be continued for many years, that the wiſdom and virtue of your children may do honour to your inſtructions, and that your grey hairs may at laſt deſcend, with peace and comfort into the grave, is the moſt ardent prayer, and ſhall be the conſtant endeavour of,

MADAM,

Your ever dutiful

and affectionate Son

B. DAWSON.

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dom and virtue of your children may do honour
to your instructions, and that your grey hairs may
at last descend, with peace and comfort into the
grave, is the most ardent prayer, and shall be the
constant endeavour of,

MADAM,

Your ever dutiful

and affectionate Son

B. DAWSON.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go.—

THE advantages of a religious education, both to individuals and ſociety, are ſo great and many, and at the ſame time ſo very obvious, that the general and increaſing neglect of it is almoſt as much to be wondered at, as it is deplorable in its conſequences. For, while daily improvements are made in all other arts and ſciences, and the preſent times are undeniably better than the former in all natural advantages, is it not ſtrange that a leſs regard ſhould be paid by the generality, to what is acknowledged to be of the greateſt importance to the intereſt and happineſs of mankind? and that moral inſtruction, or the inſtilling into young and tender minds the great and neceſſary principles of religion and virtue, the wholeſome maxims and intereſting truths of Chriſtianity ſhould be not only too much neglected, but, to appearance, more ſo than ever?

And, as it is truly deplorable to obſerve this great and growing neglect of a religious education, ſo it cannot but add to the concern which every ſerious Chriſtian muſt feel upon this account, that, where it doth take place, where ſincere deſires and endeavours are not wanting to this end, it is notwithſtanding too often badly conducted, either unprofitably, or ſometimes even to the real hurt and prejudice of youth. And from this ſource, *viz.* an injudicious method of inſtruction, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe is derived much of that averſion to religion, which ſo early diſcovers itſelf in ſome, and that undue zeal in others, and blind attachment to certain abſtruſe points, which has created ſo much diſturbance among Chriſtians, ſown thoſe diviſions and diſtractions, by which Chriſtianity has greatly ſuffered and ſtill continues to ſuffer, fruſtrated it of its true and genuine effects among its own profeſſors, and retarded its farther progreſs by the offence which all uncharitable meaſures are apt to give to its enemies.

Theſe reflections on the general neglect of, and the wrong manner in which, this important duty is performed, ſuggeſt the following as the moſt uſeful method of diſcourſing from the words of the text.

I. I ſhall particularly point out *what* it is proper for every parent to teach his child, And

II. Shew the *way* and *manner* in which this is to be done, with a direction or two reſpecting the *temper* and *actions* of children.

In the firſt place then, I am to ſpecify thoſe things in which it is proper for all parents to inſtruct their children. One would think

think indeed, conſidering in how plain a manner our duty is ſet forth, that there can be little danger of miſtaking in this reſpect; that no parent who has a common capacity, and reads the ſcriptures can be ignorant of what he ought to teach his child. However, we find it otherwiſe in fact; and cannot but obſerve, that many are fond of inſtilling into the minds of their children not only ſuch notions as can be of no uſe to them, being altogether vain and trifling, but alſo ſuch wrong and inconſiſtent principles, as claſh both with reaſon and ſcripture; and labour, beſides, to teach them what they are not capable of learning, and what they themſelves may not rightly underſtand, or, indeed, be able to underſtand.

From this obſervation the following *general* direction is inferred, *viz.* " that the things proper to be made the employment of " young minds are ſuch only, as are ſuited to their capacities, ob- " viouſly true, and of great moment and concern to them." For, by ſtriving to teach them what they *cannot underſtand*, you not only do them no good, and loſe your labour, but you hurt and diſtreſs their tender minds, and create in them an averſion to your inſtructions. By inſtilling into them, with great zeal and earneſtneſs, principles that are not *obviouſly true*, and which many good Chriſtians themſelves may have called in queſtion, you know not aſſuredly, whether you are teaching them the truth or leading them aſtray, nay, whether you are not by this means fixing the byaſs of the mind for ever on the ſide of error and deluſion: And, by engaging them in matters of *little* or *no mement*, you train them up, either to a low and deſpicable way of thinking upon religion, or elſe, make them zealots in things of indifference and leſs conſequence, while they overlook the weightier matters of the law of God.

Agreeably

Agreeably therefore to the above *general* direction, "inſtruct your "children in the knowledge of the one true God." In this you will find no difficulty. For the belief of a God is connatural with the mind of man. By this expreſſion I do not mean to aſſert either that it is univerſal, or that it would naturally have ſuggeſted itſelf to the minds of the generality of mankind, without any ſupernatural information, (queſtions more curious than uſeful) but only, that we are made capable of the knowledge of God, capable of being taught this truth, "that He is;" and that it is no ſooner propoſed to the minds of men, than (ſuch is their Nature) they readily yield their aſſent to it. If ſuch Belief was not agreeable to the nature of man, the mind would neither be ſo ſuſceptible nor ſo retentive of it, as we find it is; for, once admitted, it keeps its hold, being guarded both by reaſon and conſcience; and a man muſt break through every natural reſtraint and get quit both of his reaſon and his conſcience, before he can quit his belief, and perſuade himſelf that there is no God. This truth therefore, as it is of the firſt importance, ſo is it plain and obvious, and will gain an eaſy admittance into the minds of your children, approving itſelf to their dawning reaſon and tender conſciences.

But, here, the ſacred ſcriptures, which give us the trueſt notions and cleareſt apprehenſions of the divine nature, are to be conſulted. Had we the light of pure, uncorrupted reaſon to guide us, and in a ſufficient degree, this, no doubt, would enable us to conceive in the beſt and moſt perfect manner of God. But, as the light of reaſon is much dim'd in man and clouded with innumerable prejudices, and his irregular paſſions clogg and bear down the higher and more excellent powers of the underſtanding, he is often led into error and abſurdity. This was

more

more eſpecially the caſe with the gentile world; who, as the Apoſtle himſelf acknowledgeth, were not entirely ignorant of the being of a God; but their notions of him were become altogether abſurd, and their manner of worſhipping him no better than blaſphemous.

Let your inſtructions therefore, on this head, be drawn from the ſacred ſcriptures, the fountain of truth, and be cautious of delivering any thing contrary to what is contained therein. They inform you, "that there is but one God, one firſt cauſe and "original of all things; and to whom all other beings are in- "ferior and in ſubjection: That, as He is the moſt powerful, ſo He "is the beſt and wiſeſt of all beings: That He governs the world "by his providence, being preſent to all and in all places, hav- "ing a perfect knowledge of things and actions, and diſcern- "ing the inmoſt thoughts and moſt ſecret purpoſes of the heart: "That He is a being of ſpotleſs purity, perfectly holy, and in- "tereſteth himſelf on the ſide of religion and virtue, rewarding "the good and obedient, and puniſhing the wicked and diſobe- "dient, in mercy nevertheleſs plenteous, and ever ready to for- "give and accept ſincere penitents: And that the ſame is un- "changeable in theſe perfections of his nature."

After having ſuggeſted theſe firſt principles of religion, and impreſſed them on the minds of your children, which you will find very eaſy to be done; becauſe they are moſt plain, and what the human mind is by nature framed to receive, it will next be proper to introduce them to the knowledge of a Saviour by a plain account of the nature, ſituation and circumſtances of man, as a moral and religious being, and of thoſe various diſpenſations of providence, and ſignal communications of divine grace, which

it pleaſed his maker at different periods, according to the exigencies of his ſtate, to vouchſafe unto him. For this purpoſe, it would be highly proper to give them ſome ſuch ſhort and eaſy view of the matter as follows, and which is contained in the old Teſtament,

" That God, at firſt, made man upright and placed him in a " ſtate of dependance upon his favour, by enjoining him laws, the " breach of which was threatned with death *," that is, the deprivation of that life and being which he had ſo lately received: " That man diſobeyed his maker, and, in conſequence of it, " death paſſed upon him; and his poſterity became heirs to " mortality †." Here, it cannot be amiſs juſt to caution you againſt ſuggeſting any thing on this head which is merely controverſial, which you know has been doubted by very wiſe and good men, and of which, at leaſt, it requires the judgment of riper years to diſcern the truth or falſhood.

" That after the firſt tranſgreſſion, when men began to mul- " tiply on the face of the earth, their wickedneſs increaſed " greatly, and in leſs than 2000 years became ſo univerſal, that " the divine being, as the moral governor of the world, deter- " mined to deſtroy man, whom he had created, from the earth, " by a deluge of Water, *Noah* and his family only of all the " human race remaining alive ‡." Thus did ſin and diſobedience to the divine commands end in the deſtruction of the old world; a proper period this in the hiſtory of mankind for pauſing a little, in order to give the mind time to digeſt the narrative, and to throw in ſuch eaſy reflections upon it, as may tend to evince the

* Gen. I. 27.——II. 16. 17. † Gen. III. 6.—III. 19. 1 Cor. XV. 21. 22.
‡ Gen. VI. VII. VIII.

deadly

deadly nature of ſin, and illuſtrate at once the divine forbearance towards offending creatures, and the juſtice and equity of the puniſhment which their impenitency at laſt brought upon them.

" That it pleaſed God, however, after the waters were aſ-
" ſwaged, to reward the ſingular piety of *Noah* by aſſuring him
" of his gracious intentions to him and mankind in general, and
" to all living creatures upon the earth, to the lateſt generations;
" and entring into a covenant with him that there ſhould never
" more be a flood to deſtroy the earth *." And thus we ſee, that, as the tranſgreſſion of the divine law by our firſt parents derived a numerous train of evils upon all, ſo the righteouſneſs and piety of *Noah* hath derived a great bleſſing upon the world, in that through him we are aſſured, that the ground ſhall not be curſed any more for man's ſake, and that, while the earth remaineth, there ſhall be no interruption of the grateful and beneficial viciſſitude of, ſeed-time and harveſt, and cold and heat, and ſummer and winter, and day and night.

Under this gracious covenant, however, as men began to multiply on the earth, and the impreſſions, which the judgment of God upon the old world, and his mercies to the new, had made upon their minds, wore off, ſin began to ſhew itſelf again; the ſubtle enemy and deceiver of mankind had again ſown the ſeeds of rebellion in the hearts of the ſons of man, and was now meditating their univerſal revolt from their creator, when divine providence interpoſed to baffle his dark deſigns, and, by preventing a total apoſtacy of the human race, to prevent their univerſal ruin. " That
" to this end God called *Abraham* out of his native country, and
" ſeparated him from his kindred, and from his father's houſe,

* Gen. IX. 15.

" to

" to make of him a numerous people, who ſhould be worſhippers " of the one living and true God, and thus be inſtrumental in pre- " ſerving in the world, though ſurrounded by idolatrous nations, " the knowledge of God, and in conveying the ſame, in the fulneſs " of time, to the whole gentile world: That the covenant which " was eſtabliſhed with *Abraham* and renewed unto *Iſaac* and *Ja-* " *cob* was to this effect, *viz.* 1. That his ſeed ſhould be exceeding " numerous; 2. That it ſhould inherit the land of *Canaan* for an " everlaſting poſſeſſion; and 3. That in it all the nations of the " earth ſhould be bleſſed *.

" That God had remarkably fulfilled the two firſt promiſes " contained in this covenant, which were confined to his own " houſe and poſterity, in that he had multiplied him greatly, and " conducted and ſettled his poſterity, who increaſed as the ſtars " of heaven in multitude, in the promiſed country †;" But that the laſt and moſt extenſive promiſe, *viz.* " of all the nations of " the earth being bleſſed, began not to be fulfilled till the com- " ing of *Chriſt Jeſus*, in whom both the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, " even the whole world, was to be bleſſed and made happy, by " the publication of the Goſpel, which has brought the joyful ti- " dings of everlaſting life and ſalvation ‡."

The account of this perſon, who he was, what he did, taught and ſuffered, it will be proper for you carefully and judiciouſly to extract from the four evangeliſts, that you may be enabled to put the parts of the narration in ſuch order, that they may appear obvious and natural, and at the ſame time engage their attention. The eſſential parts, you know, are as follows, " That He was the ſon of God, ſent from heaven to inſtruct

* Gen. XII. 1. 2. 3.—XV. 5.—XVI. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.—XXII. 17. 18.—XXVI. 3. 4. —XVIII. 3. 4. † Joſh. XII. et ſeq.—XXII. 43. 44. 45. ‡ Luk. I. 72. 73.

" mankind

" mankind in their duty, and thoſe things which relate to their " everlaſting happineſs ; that he came as the promiſed *Meſſiah* " to the *Jews*, in particular ; and as the perſon alſo in whom " the world, in general, ſhould be bleſſed ; that he proved his " divine miſſion and office, both from the ancient ſcriptures, and " alſo by many and diverſe miracles which he wrought in the " moſt public and open manner, inſtantaneouſly healing all man- " ner of diſeaſes, caſting out devils, and raiſing the dead to " life again : that after a life of ſpotleſs purity, piety, and " the moſt extenſive benevolence, he ſuffered death upon the " croſs, as was propheſied of him, and as he propheſied of him- " ſelf : that he was buried and continued in the grave, in a ſtate " of death, to the third day, on which he roſe again from the " dead, ſhewed himſelf to his diſciples, and having given them a " commiſſion to go and teach all nations, (to go into all the " world, and preach the goſpel to every creature,) he was re- " ceived up into heaven : that from thence he will come to judge " the world, both the quick and the dead (for the dead ſhall be " raiſed ;) and that he will render to every one according to the " deeds done in the body whether they be good or whether they " be evil."

This is a ſketch of thoſe great truths which are delivered to us in the word of God, which every Chriſtian profeſſeth to believe, and in which he is bound to inſtruct his children.

But as the knowledge of the truth will not profit without a correſpondent practice, and faith without works is dead ; ſo you are to teach your children, what they are to do as well as what they are to believe. Now the ſum of all this is contained in that ſaying of our Saviour, *viz.* " Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all

" thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind;' and " thy neighbour as thyſelf." On theſe two commandments hang all thoſe laws to which God has enjoined obedience, in whatever terms they may be expreſſed or ſpecified in the law and prophets. " That for this, they are not to worſhip idols, nor to take the " name of the Lord in vain, nor to diſhonour their father and " mother, nor to do any murder, nor to ſteal, nor to covet their " neighbour's goods, *&c.*": And moreover, " that they are to " keep the commandments, not merely according to the letter, but " according to the judgment of their hearts and conſciences;" thus for inſtance, though in the law it be only ſaid, thou ſhalt do no murder, as if the outward act alone, of illegally taking away the life of one's fellow creature, was forbid, yet " that the law of " univerſal love to man requires it of them, that they be not ſo " much as angry with their brother without a cauſe, nor harbour " in their breaſts any rancorous diſpoſition againſt him, which is a " real tranſgreſſion, an actual breach of the divine law: that they " are not only to abſtain from theft, ſtrictly interpreted, but alſo " from injuring another in any reſpect, whether it be by taking " away his property, blaſting his reputation, or by any deſign and " contrivance againſt him whatſoever." In like manner with regard to the duty they owe to God, " that they are not only to pay " religious worſhip to him alone, and refuſe to bow down to idols, " but alſo to be cautious of diſhonouring him by any irreverent " expreſſions among men, by ſhewing any contempt and diſregard of his authority or injunctions, by ſcoffing at religion, or " bringing any ill report upon the way of truth and piety, all " which is utterly inconſiſtent with a fervent love to God." In ſhort, " that this commandment of love to God and man in-

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" cludes in it a regular diſcharge of thoſe duties and offices, how " ever various and manifold, to which they may be called by the " differing circumſtances, ſituations and events of life;" to all which you may add, " that the reward of this obedience is, ge- " rally ſpeaking, length of days, increaſe of ſubſtance, a good " name and peace of mind in this preſent world, and, in the next, " eternal life through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

Thus I have ſhewn you what you are to teach your children in a brief ſummary of our religion, as contained in the ſcriptures of the old and new teſtament: In this ſummary you will not find any thing that is ſo much as doubted by thoſe who profeſs to believe the ſcriptures. Theſe truths and principles you will acknowledge to be of the utmoſt importance; and they are, beſides, very plain and obvious, or may be rendered ſo by your leiſure inſtructions, where the brevity I have been obliged to conſult in laying them before you may have occaſioned ſome obſcurity.

II. Let us now conſider, in the ſecond place, the way and manner in which religious inſtruction ſhould be conveyed to the minds of children. And one very obvious direction that occurs on this head is, that you inſtruct them gradually, beginning with the plaineſt things, and not being eager to have your child appear uncommonly forward in having learnt many things ſoon. This is an error, which in other arts we obſerve the beſt maſters carefully guard againſt, well knowing, that this would be the ready way to lead their pupils to a ſlight and ſuperficial knowledge only of what they are learning, and cauſe them to contract awkward and bad habits in all they do. It is juſt the ſame (but the conſequences of error here are the more fatal, as the ſubject is of ſo much greater importance) in adminiſtring religious inſtruction to young and unformed minds. By proceeding irregularly, and not obſerving an eaſy pro-

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greſs in your method of teaching, inſtead of communicating the more knowledge, you but perplex and bewilder their underſtandings, and train them to an haſty and vague way of thinking; by crowding freſh objects too faſt upon them, you make them hurry from the firſt and plaineſt principles before they have become familiar, and rooted themſelves in the heart as well as in the underſtanding. And having loſt their firſt principles, they muſt needs wander, their life after in a maze of error and uncertainty. The mind is neceſſarily led into a wrong train of thinking and reaſoning, becomes odd and fanciful in its notions, and if, in this ſituation, it ſhould eſcape the one extreme, of enthuſiaſm, ſuperſtition and bigotry, it muſt fall into the other extreme, and fluctuate for ever on the unbounded ocean of ſcepticiſm and infidelity. But, though I have delivered the ſummary of religion in hiſtorical order to *you*, yet let me juſt obſerve, that this may not be the propereſt order in which you are to ſuggeſt it to your *children*. This muſt be left to your own judgment. You muſt be ever obſerving their reach of capacity, and the progreſs they make, and conſidering what is moſt natural to be communicated under the differing circumſtances of this kind.

In the next place; as you will find it of great advantage to deliver your inſtructions by degrees, neither over haſtily, nor in a confuſed and unconnected manner, ſo you can hardly communicate any thing of this nature to your children in too familiar and condeſcending a manner. In this, indeed, the art of religious education chiefly conſiſts. For, whatever you would teach them, it is moſt natural to think, they will make the greateſt proficiency in thoſe things, in which they take pleaſure and delight. But this they cannot do, ſo long as they are taught to look upon what they learn

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concerning God and their duty as a ſort of taſk from you. This muſt give them a real diſguſt at religion, and make them unconcerned to underſtand any thing more of the matter than what will enable them to ſatisfy your ſeverity; which accounts, in a great meaſure, for that which we every day obſerve, *viz.* that moſt children are fonder of being employed in any thing than what relates to religion. This preference cannot be from nature. For we find the human mind is capable of being impreſſed with nothing ſo much or ſo eaſily, as with a ſenſe of religion. But it is, becauſe parents will treat with their children about moſt other matters familiarly, with an air of freedom, friendlineſs, and ſuch an eaſy condeſcenſion, as is moſt engaging and winning upon their ingenuous and docile tempers, while they are but too apt, on the ſubject of religion, to aſſume a kind of ſeverity and affect an uncommon diſtance.

And, under this head, I beg I may be allowed to paſs a reflection upon the merely formal manner, in which this uſeful employment of inſtructing youth in the principles of religion, is ſo generally conducted. Many parents think they have done enough and diſcharged this duty, if they have not neglected, at ſtated times, to employ their children in reading or hearing the word of God, in anſwering repeatedly out of the ſame catechiſm, queſtions, in all likelihood, far above their capacities, and learning a form or two of devotion.—But this comes far ſhort of the duty in its full extent; and if you content yourſelves with this, it is plain you have not your heart and affections engaged in the work. The real improvement of your children in uſeful knowledge and true goodneſs and piety ſeems not to be your great care and concern: But it is only out of cuſtom, or perhaps, for order's ſake and your own con-

veniency, that you inſiſt upon theſe trite exerciſes from them. Whereas, a ſincere deſire of their improvement and an affectionate concern for their beſt, their ſpiritual intereſts, would lead you to take every opportunity and occaſion that offers of inſtructing them, of conveying to them ſome important truth or wholeſome maxim, of explaining to them what they read or hear, of trying their capacities and examining into the progreſs they make, or laſtly, of reſolving their doubts, removing any difficulties which may occur to them, and ſatisfying their inquiſitiveneſs after the truth. For by treating them in this familiar, eaſy, and affectionate manner, you will obſerve in them an encreaſing fondneſs for being inſtructed by you; and that they will be readier to learn, and are capable of taking in knowledge faſter than you can ſuggeſt it to them. Becauſe the mind is naturally formed for the perception of truth; and there is hardly any capacity ſo dull and weak as not to receive it, when it is adminiſtered ſuitably, and as it ought to be.

But in the laſt place, beſides inſtilling into the minds of your children the great truths and principles of the chriſtian religion in the beſt and moſt proper manner, you are to take eſpecial care of their tempers and behaviour. You conſult indeed for this greatly, while you neglect not to cultivate their underſtandings and furniſh them with religious knowledge; as this is to have an influence upon their hearts, and to regulate their conduct. But knowledge alone, not even in the nobleſt attainments thereof, can be ſufficient for rectitude of manners without a proper culture of the diſpoſitions of the mind.

For this purpoſe therefore you muſt attentively conſider the natural bent and inclination of your children. For we find that nature, or the God of nature, to ſerve the purpoſes of his providence and the more extenſive benefit of ſociety, has made an original difference

ference in the conſtitutions of men; having given to each mind its particular bent or propenſity. Hence it is that we obſerve one thirſt after knowledge, and for this willingly forego every other advantage: while another neglects this, to find his happineſs in the more active ſcenes of life. Some we obſerve naturally ſerious, others as remarkably alert and ſprightly in their natural tempers. And this difference we are not to look upon as undeſigned and by chance, but as a wiſe contrivance in the moral frame of man: nor are we to judge any particular caſt of the mind to be, originally and in itſelf, wrong or worſe than another, but to judge of the natural temper of every man, as we do of the parts of the body, *viz.* that, as each of theſe is neceſſary to the whole, and not wrong in itſelf, and from the firſt, but only as it comes to be hurt, or deformed afterwards, ſo the different tempers and propenſities of men are each deſigned to promote the benefit of ſociety, and are not wrong in themſelves, from the firſt, but only as they come to be perverted, directed to wrong ends, or placed upon wrong objects.

It therefore highly concerns parents to underſtand well the natural propenſities and leading deſires of their children, that they may manage them artfully, breaking them inſenſibly to that courſe of action, and accuſtoming them to thoſe objects, which are worthy the purſuit of rational and intelligent beings. By ſuch an intimate acquaintance with their moral frame, you have a great advantage over them, and may be able to lead them on to their duty without thoſe harſh meaſures which might tend only to break their ſpirits, ſour their tempers, and, by making them deſpair of ever pleaſing you and gaining your favour and approbation, drive them on their final ruin.

But notwithſtanding your beſt endeavours to know and regulate their natural diſpoſitions, it muſt be expected, that ſome bad

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habits will be contracted, at leaſt, that the variety of temptations to which they are expoſed, will ſubject them to ſeveral imprudencies and irregularities of behaviour. Theſe require your conſtant attention and vigilance to prevent for the future. And this is to be done, not by reſolving to puniſh them for every offence; for in this way you may only provoke them to wrath and obſtinacy, make them callous in time to all correction, and leſſen their regard of your authority; but it may be done by gentle admonitions, affectionate reproofs, or even by merely convincing them of their faults, and making it evidently appear to themſelves and their own judgment, that they are in the wrong. This itſelf will ſometimes be ſufficient to reſtrain them from the like practiſes; ſo ingenuous is the natural temper of ſome children. At other times, frequently indeed, it will be neceſſary to repreſent to them the folly of what they have done, and what you ſuſpect them inclined to repeat; and to convince them, that the fault which they are tempted through a proſpect of ſome pleaſure or profit to commit, cannot poſſibly anſwer their end, but muſt neceſſarily iſſue in their hurt and diſadvantage in one reſpect or other; in bringing ſhame and diſgrace upon them, in filling them with uneaſy and uncomfortable reflections upon a conviction and ſenſe of their bad behaviour, or in rendering them leſs beloved by their friends and acquaintance, and leſs deſerving of your favourable and kind regards.

And let me add to this, that you ſhould ſometimes even paſs by and take no notice to them of certain faults, but endeavour to correct them (where it can be done) inſenſibly, and without ſo much as their ſuſpecting that they were obſerved by you. A great many of their follies and faulty actions need not ſo much your direct blame and cenſure, much leſs your ſeverity, as your careful attention to and ſtrict obſervance of them, that you may come at the

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cauſe itſelf, learn from what ſource they are derived, and mark what wrong diſpoſitions and temper they indicate. To be ſhort, "in training up your children to virtue and religion, apply your "chief care and endeavours to the rectifying the temper itſelf. "This is the main point. For if your aim be only directed upon "preventing their wrong actions, you may chaſtiſe them endleſsly "for theſe, and find all your pains and labour to prevent them in- "effectual at the laſt, becauſe the principle or temper from "whence they proceed remains neglected and unrectified."

Thus have I endeavoured, in the plaineſt manner I am able, to point out to you *what things* it is proper for you to teach your children, and ſhewn you in what *way* and *manner* they ſhould be ſuggeſted to them, together with a remark or two on the proper obſervance of their actions, and management of their tempers. I have been very plain as well as minute upon the ſubject. But this, I think, needs no apology. For to what purpoſe is it to harangue upon the neceſſity and importance of a religious education, or to complain in general terms of the many deficiencies of it, and the wrong methods that are too often purſued in training up young minds to piety and virtue, without either inſtancing and ſhewing what theſe deficiencies and wrong methods are, or, at leaſt, pointing out a way by which the one may be ſupplied and the other rectified.

And I have purpoſely choſen to employ the time allotted me, in ſuggeſting a few proper and neceſſary hints concerning the *method* of performing this duty, rather than exhorting you to the *practice* of it; becauſe, I believe, more are willing to *do* it than underſtand *how* it may be done in the beſt manner; I have not time, therefore, now to expatiate upon the many and ſtrong obligations you lie under to the diſcharge of this duty, nor upon the advantages accru-

ing from it, both to your children in their preſent as well as everlaſting happineſs, to yourſelves in the comforts of filial obedience, and to ſociety in general, the welfare and happineſs of which do ſo evidently depend upon the virtue and piety of the members thereof.

Let me, however, conjure you (and ſum up all in this) to practiſe this duty in faithfulneſs and ſincerity, as you will anſwer it at the laſt day of accounts. For you muſt be anſwerable, not only for your own behaviour, but alſo for the behaviour of your children, ſo far as that ſhall have depended upon your example or inſtruction. May God grant that you may then give in your accounts with joy and not with grief, and be made happy and rejoice together through eternity.

But I cannot conclude without addreſſing myſelf in few words to the younger part of my audience, with whoſe attendance, through your influence and paternal authority, I am this day favoured, and for whoſe benefit the above directions to you are intended.

My dear friends,

How amiable and pleaſant is religion, and how profitable are the counſels of wiſdom! The leſſon you have to learn from your parents and religious inſtructors, is eaſy and delightful, as well as highly beneficial. They are to teach you the knowledge of God; who He is, what He has done for you, and what He would have you do, that you may be happy. Now in doing this, they introduce you, as it were, to your beſt friend; to Him, that made you, preſerves you, and gives you every good thing you enjoy; who is ever preſent with you, guides you by his good providence through the dangers and temptations of the day, and watcheth for you in the night-ſeaſon, when your ſenſes are locked up, and you can take no thought for yourſelves.

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Such inſtruction as this, as it is extremely eaſy, what you are capable of underſtanding, as much as I that ſpeak to you of it, ſo it muſt needs be delightful to the mind. What pleaſure may it yield you, to know and conſider, that beſides the kind affections and aſſiſtance of your earthly parents, friends and relatives, you have an inviſible protection and a tender concern exerciſed for you by your Father and Friend in heaven! And if you receive theſe principles of education with chearfulneſs from your inſtructors, and find them alſo agreeable and comfortable upon reflection, you will be bleſſed in their genuine effects upon your own tempers, and they will make you a bleſſing and comfort to others, but particularly a comfort, credit and a crown of glory to your aged parents, when every other comfort begins to leave them, and all their own honours, of beauty, ſtrength, ſplendor, knowledge, or renown, yield to time and are tarniſhed with the infirmities of nature. Having had an early acquaintance with God, and being taught to conceive well and worthily of Him, as a good being and your moſt able friend, you will naturally love Him, and endeavour to ſecure His favour by ſtriving always to do thoſe things which are pleaſing to Him, and avoiding whatſoever you know muſt offend Him.— Thus you will live virtuouſly; thus you will live honourably; thus you will live happily, And ſeek not, (let me caution you) honour and happineſs but in the path of duty and the ſervice of your maker. For were it poſſible to find them in the by-paths of ſin and the ſervice of ſatan, yet ſuch honour and ſuch happineſs can laſt only the term of your preſent life, nay, only while your health and the vigour of your conſtitutions, which decay the faſter for ſin, continue. All, afterwards, is ſorrow and ſore diſtreſs. But chuſe God and religion for your portion now and through your better days, and you will experience the comfort and wiſdom of

ſuch a choice, more eſpecially, when they are paſt, and thoſe evil days draw near, in which the ſinner ſaith, I have no pleaſure. But your heart will then be fixed, truſting in the Lord, that, as He has been the guide of your youth, ſo He will be the ſupport of your age, and your portion for ever.

" Hear therefore, little children, the inſtruction of your fathers, " and forſake not the law of your mothers. For they ſhall be an " ornament of grace to your heads and chains about your neck." " Whoſo hearkeneth unto their counſel dwelleth ſafely, and ſhall " be quiet from the fear of evil."

To theſe kind admonitions of the wiſe man, I ſhall juſt add and conclude with the affectionate exhortation, or rather charge of the apoſtle, " Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for " this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the " firſt commandment with promiſe; that it may be well with " thee, and thou mayeſt live long on the earth. And ye, fathers; " provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the " nurture and admonition of the Lord."

F I N I S.